



# 2025 Utah State **Rehabilitation Council Report**



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## MISSION

The mission of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), in partnership with the Utah State Office of Rehabilitation and in collaboration with disability groups, is to ensure quality vocational rehabilitation services for eligible individuals as they make informed choices to achieve employment.

We accomplish this mission by reviewing programs, analyzing service delivery processes and advising on policies and procedures.



# REHABILITATION COUNCIL MEMBERS

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## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

- Jennie Dopp, Parent Representative, Chair
- Bianca Gonzalez, CAP, Vice Chair
- Esperanza Reyes, Utah Parent Center, Secretary
- Lavinia Gripentrog, USBE, Past Chair
- Shayne Roy, Business, Industry, and Labor, Member-at-Large

## MEMBERS:

- Summer Sylvester, Beautiful Ability (CRP)
- Jenni Thompson, Blind and Low Vision Community Representative
- Austin Oseguera, Utah Center for Assistive Technology (UCAT)
- Heather Mousley, Department of Workforce Services
- Julie Beckstead, Utah State Independent Living Council
- Dani Williams, Business, Industry and Labor
- Steven Phelps, VR Counselor
- Linda Lartigue, Business, Industry and Labor
- Shane Roy, Business, Industry and Labor
- Jasi Sefcik, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community Representative
- Lisa Wade, Division of Service for People with Disabilities
- Christine Anderson, University of Utah
- Selena Harris, Consumer
- Jared Sorenson, Business, Industry and Labor
- Ramsey Beesley, Consumer
- Marnie West, DSBVI Representative
- Sarah Brenna, Utah State Office of Rehabilitation



## MESSAGE FROM THE COUNCIL CHAIR



AS I COMPLETE MY TERM as Chair of the Utah State Rehabilitation Council, I am filled with gratitude and pride for what we've accomplished together in service to Utahns with disabilities. This has been a period of growth, advocacy and renewed purpose for the Council and, by extension, the clients we serve through Vocational Rehabilitation (VR).

From day one, my focus has been advocacy: for the individuals who rely on VR to achieve meaningful employment and independence; for the funding and resources necessary to make those outcomes possible; and for supporting processes that champion the important work of Vocational Rehabilitation as an organization. Every person who walks through the doors of Vocational Rehabilitation has a

story, a goal, and potential that deserves recognition and support. Our mission as an SRC has been to advise and assist in efforts to support VR and self-advocates wherever possible.

This year, we worked hard to elevate the visibility and message of the SRC. We strengthened relationships with VR leadership, used our voice to support the VR mission, and engaged with leaders to underscore the life-changing impact of VR services. We emphasized that investing in these programs is not only a matter of fairness; it's about building a stronger, more inclusive workforce for Utah.

I have been inspired by the dedication of my fellow Council members and our partners at the Utah State Office of Rehabilitation, the USOR Assistant Director, Aaron Thompson, and the USOR Director, Sarah Brenna. Their leadership and perseverance remind us why this work matters so profoundly, and our goal was to support them in their critical effort.

As I pass the gavel, I do so with full confidence in the Council's continued leadership and passion. The SRC's role as an advisor and bridge builder between clients and leadership has never been more important. Thank you for the honor of serving and helping advance the cause of opportunity, dignity and meaningful employment for all Utahns.

With sincere appreciation,

Jennie Dopp



# MESSAGE FROM THE USOR DIRECTOR



I AM PLEASED TO SHARE the highlights and achievements of the Utah State Office of Rehabilitation during fiscal year 2025. Our dedicated team has worked tirelessly to help individuals with disabilities, assisting them in achieving competitive, integrated employment and enhancing their overall quality of life.

- **The ABLE Utah savings program** is growing, with a 41% increase in active accounts and now managing over \$10 million in assets, providing people with disabilities, including many VR clients, with greater financial independence and long-term savings opportunities.
- **The VR program** successfully helped 2,450 individuals with disabilities exit the program employed in competitive, integrated jobs, marking a 22% increase over the previous performance year.
- **The VR program** served 21,423 individuals last program year, representing a 13% increase compared to the previous year.
- **USOR grew our support** to employers by 15% this year, adding new in-person job fairs in rural areas and expanding virtual training to help more businesses hire and support our clients.
- **We continue to support** more young people for careers, seeing a 14% increase in students using our Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS).

USOR is implementing an Order of Selection (OOS). This is a federally mandated system used when resources (funding and staff) are not sufficient, ensuring that services are prioritized for those with the most significant disabilities.

USOR has completed all federal requirements—including public input, State Rehabilitation Council feedback and final approval from the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA).

- **Priority Categories:** The OOS classifies eligible individuals into three categories based on the extent of services needed: Most Significant Disabilities (MSD), Significant Disabilities (SD), and Disabilities (D).
- **Impact:** Under the OOS, newly eligible individuals classified as MSD will continue to have immediate access to services. However, the SD and D priority categories are currently closed, meaning individuals assigned to these categories are placed on a waitlist (Delayed Status) until resources become available.
- **Current Clients:** It is important to note that all 11,664 current VR clients with existing employment plans (IPEs) will continue to receive services and will not be impacted by the Order of Selection. At the time of implementation, approximately 938 newly eligible individuals are projected to be placed in Delayed Status.

We remain fully committed to our mission of empowering individuals with disabilities and will continue to adapt and innovate to meet their evolving needs. We deeply appreciate the ongoing dedication and collaboration of our stakeholders and partners in this critical endeavor. Thank you for your dedication and collaboration.

Sincerely,

Sarah Brenna  
Director, USOR

# Introduction



## THE UTAH STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

The Utah State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is a body of citizens appointed by the Executive Director of the Department of Workforce Services under the authority of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

The council comprises consumers, professionals, employers, labor representatives, family and parent advocates and service providers who promote public awareness, support of the vocational rehabilitation program and advocate for individuals with disabilities. The majority of council members consist of individuals with disabilities, many of whom have been involved as participants in the vocational rehabilitation process. Members of the SRC have been chosen for their interest in, specialized knowledge of and expertise with serving the disabled community. The tenure of selected SRC members is three years.

The council provides direct communication from consumers, rehabilitation professionals, business, industry, labor, service providers and other individuals interested in improving the services provided by the VR program. Collectively, this group reviews, analyzes and advises the Utah State Office of Rehabilitation (USOR) regarding the VR program.

Over the years, the SRC has established strong community relationships among people with disabilities, local businesses, private and public agencies, service providers, community organizations and advocacy groups to promote the organization's objectives. The SRC continues to be an active partner with the VR program to ensure quality services to eligible consumers. SRC members provide critical support to USOR and to individuals with disabilities served by the agency by communicating with legislators on both the state and national levels. They promote legislation and funding requests that continue the specialized services provided by USOR.

The council has contributed, to and continues to be involved in, the development and implementation of USOR's strategic plan and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Combined State Plan. It has also identified areas of strength within USOR, acknowledged the best practices of the agency and recommended improvements to the VR program. Council members and USOR staff members agree that through appropriate communication and partnerships, vocational rehabilitation services for people with disabilities in Utah will continue to improve.



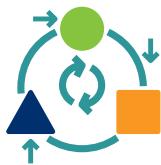
# PURPOSE: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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The responsibilities of the State Rehabilitation Council are outlined in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended in 1998 and include the following:

- Review, analyze and advise the Utah State Office of Rehabilitation regarding the performance of its responsibilities, particularly those related to eligibility (including order of selection); the extent, scope and effectiveness of services provided; and the functions of the state rehabilitation agency that affect the ability of individuals with disabilities to achieve employment outcomes.
- In partnership with USOR, develop, agree to and evaluate the effectiveness of the vocational rehabilitation program.
- Advise USOR regarding activities authorized to be carried out and assist in preparing the WIOA Unified State Plan, amendments to the plan, applications, reports, needs assessments and evaluations.
- Conduct a review and an analysis of the effectiveness of VR services and consumer satisfaction.
- Prepare and submit an annual report to the Department of Workforce Services and the commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) on the status of VR in the state and make the report available to the public.
- Coordinate the council's work with the activities of other disability-related councils within the state.
- Establish working relationships between the VR program, the Statewide Independent Living Council, the Special Education Advisory Panel established under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the State Developmental Disabilities Council and the State Workforce Development Board.
- Perform additional functions that the SRC determines are appropriate and comparable to other functions performed by the council.

The SRC, in partnership with the USOR VR program, is committed to helping the people of Utah who qualify for services to obtain better jobs with a living wage, health care benefits and better career opportunities and to become as independent as possible. The council believes individuals with disabilities should be full and active partners in the VR process. Members of the SRC seek to work cooperatively with USOR to ensure that the activities of the VR program are carried out in a manner that is respectful of an individual's dignity and recognizes an individual's right to make informed choices.



# 2024-2025 YEAR IN REVIEW

## DIVISION DIRECTOR UPDATES

Division Director Sarah Brenna provided the Council with key updates on state and national issues affecting USOR and the VR program. Director Brenna addressed federal funding challenges. She shared upcoming telework modifications, primarily affecting Disability Determination Services, and provided legislative updates on employee COLA adjustments, performance-based pay bonuses, and the Department of Workforce Services' transition under the Economic Development Committee during the legislative session. She also highlighted updates related to Disability Employment Awareness Month and recognizing the critical partnership between VR and employers that are recognized by the Golden Key Awards.

## Order of Selection (OOS)

Director Brenna and Assistant Director Aaron Thompson discussed the decision to implement an Order of Selection due to increasing expenses, inflation, rising application and growing client numbers. The OOS process prioritizes service based on the significance of disability while maintaining services for clients with established plans. Thompson reviewed historical data, cost containment strategies, and lessons from the 2015 OOS implementation. He outlined the impact on students, community partners, educators, and Utah's workforce system, as well as state plan amendment requirements, public comment procedures, RSA approval, and steps for implementing a wait list. Town hall meetings and staff notifications were reported, emphasizing VR's commitment to transparency, quality service, collaboration, and staff support. The SRC voted unanimously in support of implementing the Order of Selection and participated in the town hall meetings.

## Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD)

Assistant Director Thompson provided a follow-up overview of USORs new CSPD as a framework for developing qualified VR counselors and ensuring compliance with federal personnel standards. The YesLMS platform serves as the VR-specific training system for both new and current staff, supporting skill development across twelve core competencies, including Foundations of VR counseling, Medical Aspects of Disabilities, Ethics, Case Management, and Counseling Theories. Assistant Director Thompson also provided an overview of the pathway still available to VR counselors to pursue a masters and certification in rehabilitation counseling, along with DWS tuition reimbursement and promotion opportunities.

## Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA)

Thompson provided a dedicated update on the CSNA, a federally mandated, tri-annual assessment designed to evaluate the needs of individuals with disabilities in Utah. The assessment focuses on individuals with the most significant disabilities, underserved populations, youth, students, and those in the workforce system. Conducted by Utah State University, the CSNA uses multiple data sources, including stakeholder focus groups, former and current client surveys, program data analysis, and key informant interviews. SRC members played a critical role in the CSNA by participating in these key informant interviews and providing input to guide programmatic priorities and improvements. Principal Investigator Dr. Brian Phillips attended SRC meetings to provide updates and progress reports on the CSNA. The completed CSNA is scheduled to be presented to the Council in 2026, and findings will inform VR strategic planning,

service development, and resource allocation to better meet the needs of Utah's disability community.

## VR Program Updates

Assistant Director Thompson shared VR program performance metrics, including new applicants, closed cases, and counselor caseloads. He reviewed WIOA performance measures, Pre-ETS initiatives, website updates, and alignment with Department goals. Thompson introduced new high school transition counselors in Centerville, Spanish Fork, Provo, and Taylorsville, Spanish-language Pre-ETS and Informational Interview Guides, client experience surveys, and upcoming virtual events. Regional trainers and an additional Pre-ETS Program specialist provide ongoing support to counselors. Thompson also reviewed the July 2024 RSA federal monitoring visit, highlighting required updates to the Case Service Manual and internal controls. Corrective action plans, quarterly RSA updates, and SRC reporting were outlined. WIOA VR and supported employment goals and priorities were reviewed, including support for the SRC and Statewide Independent Living Council, Pre-ETS services, minority and underserved groups, work-based learning, and co-enrollment with Adult Education and Workforce Development programs, with SRC input guiding final decisions.

## Policy Updates

Policy and Training Coordinator Rylee Williams provided updates on VR policies, including those released in alignment with RSA monitoring corrective actions. She highlighted specific updates such as ceasing the use of interim IPE goals, updating outdated citations and language, and ensuring policies reflect current federal regulations. Williams also incorporated SRC feedback on the new Internal Controls Manual policies to ensure the Case Service Manual (CSM) policies are regularly reviewed, updated, and aligned with oversight requirements. Additionally, she provided updates on the VR University curriculum delivered through YesLMS, which supports experiential learning, personalized

learning plans, progress tracking, assessments, and continuing education credits for new and experienced counselors. Twelve core competencies are emphasized, including Counseling Foundations, Medical Aspects of Disabilities, Ethics, Case Management, and Counseling Theories. Williams described the policy review process, including scope, responsibilities, review cycles, revisions, and impact on client services, with collaboration across administration, field staff, and SRC stakeholders. She also reviewed Disability Priority Classification, ongoing staff training, and monthly case reviews to ensure policy compliance and data validation.

## Consumer Satisfaction Surveys

USOR Systems and Quality Assurance Manager Nicole Fraedrich reviewed improvements to consumer satisfaction surveys, including changes in wording, forwarding of survey responses to district directors, and integration into counselor training and program evaluation. The transition to the Qualtrics platform in March 2023 improved automation, and as of January 2024, 200 surveys were sent monthly with an 18.9% return rate. Feedback highlighted both program strengths and opportunities for service improvements.

## Community Partner and Program Presentations

Throughout 2024–2025, Council members and partners presented programs supporting individuals with disabilities to promote collaboration and awareness. Presenters included DevPipeline, highlighting software development apprenticeships and workforce engagement; Beautiful Ability, discussing supported employment services and partnership strategies; VR Counseling Supervisor Steven Phelps on supervisory roles and leadership development; and Cyrusher E-Bikes' Jared Sorensen, showcasing customized e-bikes for client transportation needs.

Utah Valley University Accessibility Services highlighted Pre-ETS peer mentorship, self-advocacy, problem-solving, time management, communication skills, and campus resource utilization. Brian Phillips

from Utah State University presented the Transition Readiness Toolkit (TRT), a virtual tool measuring outcomes, reducing training costs, and supporting contract monitoring. Camp K's Pre-ETS summer program, presented by Mircea Divricean, emphasized independence, inclusion, accessible recreational therapy, and skill-building activities. Dr. Matthew Wappett of the USU Institute for Disability Research, Policy and Practice reviewed 50+ years of research, training, and services, and discussed opportunities for VR collaboration in grants, project implementation, and training.

Lavinia Gripentrog from the Utah State Board of Education presented Post-School Outcomes 2024 Survey results, including increased college enrollment and barriers faced by unemployed youth. Jason Bennington reviewed community rehabilitation program (CRP) provider agreements, including updates on conflict of interest, non-discrimination, code of conduct, sexual harassment, insurance, background checks, and client record protections. Kevin Bolander from the DWS Legal Division presented the Open and Public Meetings Act, covering definitions, notice requirements, meeting procedures, conflicts of interest, and public accountability.

## **Business Relations Updates**

Business Relations Coordinator Leah Lobato highlighted projects supporting VR counselors and community employers, including Work Ability Job Fairs, the Golden Key Awards, WorkforceWin videos, employer workshops, lunch-and-learns, career fairs, and strategies to assist with recruitment, hiring, and retention of individuals with disabilities.

## **Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) Updates**

Transition and Supported Employment Coordinator Aimee Langone reviewed Pre-ETS service contracts, a new RFP, contractor performance, and monitoring activities. She highlighted summer activities, including the annual Transition Institute, fee-for-service programs, and educational collaboration resources. Notably, the agency fully expended its 15% Pre-ETS funding reserve,

maximizing resources to support pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities.

## **2025 Transition Impact Awards**

As outlined in a presentation by AVI Human Services, USOR was recognized as a national leader in the 2025 Transition Impact Awards for measurable student skill growth across multiple Pre-ETS service areas. USOR Pre-ETS providers also excelled with students starting below the 25th percentile, earning multiple Uplift Awards. At the state level, USOR ranked number one nationally in eight service categories: Job Exploration Counseling, Work-Based Learning Experiences, Postsecondary Counseling, Financial Literacy, Independent Living, Instruction in Self-Advocacy, Job-Seeking Training, and Workplace Soft Skills. These accomplishments reflect strong collaboration between VR, schools, and community partners, and demonstrate Utah's commitment to high-quality transition services that foster independence and long-term success.

# ATTACHMENT 4.2 (C)

Attachment 4.2 (C): Summary of Input and Recommendations of the State Rehabilitation Council, Response of the Designated State Unit and Explanations for Rejection of Input or Recommendations.

In addition to the review, analysis and recommendations covered above, the SRC made recommendations to the vocational rehabilitation (VR) portion of the Unified State Plan, and as required by section 101 (a) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) of 2014.

The following is a summary of SRC recommendations made from October 2024 to September 2025 and USOR's response and actions taken regarding these recommendations:

## Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Accounts:

**SRC INPUT:** Council members expressed enthusiasm for the use of ABLE accounts and requested that information and training be made available to CRPs and Pre-ETS providers.

## Comprehensive System of Personnel Development Updates

**SRC INPUT:** With the change in state statutes eliminating the state licensure requirement for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, the SRC supported USOR's proposed changes to the Comprehensive System for Personnel Development (CSPD) requirements, including removing the national certification and master's degree prerequisites. The SRC recommended that USOR develop a training plan to ensure counselors have the necessary knowledge and skills to provide quality services. The council also requested updates on the outcome of the new training program.

## Supported Education Milestone Project

**SRC INPUT:** Following a USOR presentation in May 2024, the council strongly supported the new Supported Education Milestone project and requested that it include all VR clients, including those with intellectual disabilities.

## New VR Counselor Training Program

**SRC INPUT:** SRC members expressed support for the updated CSPD plan and VR University curriculum. They requested clarification on timelines, competency tracking, and inclusion of core topics such as Pre-ETS, counseling theory, ethics, assistive technology, and self-care. Members emphasized the importance of ensuring all staff are prepared to meet federal VR program requirements.

## RSA Monitoring Report Findings

**SRC INPUT:** SRC members reviewed the VR Performance Update and RSA Federal Monitoring visit findings from August 2024. Members asked questions about the impact on federal funding and ways the SRC could support USOR in implementing corrective actions. No additional feedback on the policy updates was provided.

## CRP Provider Agreement Updates

**SRC INPUT:** SRC members expressed support and provided a vote of approval for the updated CRP provider agreement and Performance Dashboards. They also requested that these documents be made publicly available.

## Review of WIOA State Plan Goal Update

**SRC INPUT:** SRC reviewed the 2024–2027 WIOA State Plan VR goals and voted to recommend

continuing all current goals for the next two years, except Goal 7 (Improving Access and Awareness of Pre-ETS), noting significant progress and that Pre-ETS is addressed through other goals.

#### **Order of Selection:**

The Utah State Office of Rehabilitation leadership met with the State Rehabilitation Council executive committee on August 18, 2025, to discuss the need to implement an Order of Selection (OOS) due to resource limitations. Recognizing the significance of this issue and its impact on service delivery, the Council agreed that an additional meeting was necessary to engage in a more detailed discussion.

On September 3, 2025, the Council reconvened, and USOR provided a comprehensive presentation on the key components of the OOS. The presentation included information on priority categories, the criteria for identifying individuals with the most significant disabilities, the administration and implementation of OOS, and a fiscal forecast demonstrating the agency's financial position and the necessity of moving forward with OOS.

Following the presentation, the Council conducted a formal vote, during which all members affirmed the decision to pursue the OOS. This step ensures that vocational rehabilitation services can allocate resources in a manner that prioritizes individuals with the most significant disabilities while maintaining program sustainability.

In moving forward with implementation, the SRC recommended that USOR provide clear information to clients, stakeholders, and the public to ensure a thorough understanding of the process. The Council also suggested exploring alternative terminology for the "Wait List" to avoid confusion with the long-term support waitlists maintained by the designated ID/DD agency in Utah.

Additionally, the SRC requested that USOR continue providing frequent updates on the process.

Following the SRC's vote of support, the Council received the draft state plan amendment and notices for public town halls scheduled for September 17 and 18, 2025. The state plan amendment and notices were posted on USOR's website and social media platforms, distributed through email list serves and posted in USOR offices. SRC members reviewed this information and disseminated it through their respective networks, with several members attending the public town hall meetings. Questions raised during these town halls addressed potential impacts to existing clients, informational resources that would be available to the public post-implementation, the appeal process for clients regarding their priority classification, OOS implementation procedures, services for students, and counselor caseload capacity.

### **USOR RESPONSES AND ACTIONS TAKEN**

#### **Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Accounts:**

**USOR RESPONSE:** USOR accepted this recommendation and will provide training and resources on the ABLE process to providers. This will be delivered through the UWIPS Team, including the Pre-ETS Financial Literacy Specialist.

#### **Comprehensive System of Personnel Development Updates**

**USOR RESPONSE:** USOR accepted the council's input and outlined strategies to address the licensing changes, including support for counselors currently in approved master's degree programs, reimbursement through Workforce Services' tuition assistance, incentives for passing the CRC exam; along with providing in-house and external training for VR counselors. USOR agreed to provide an overview of the finalized CPSD plan.

## **Supported Education Milestone Project**

**USOR RESPONSE:** USOR accepted the council's input and discussed a pilot program resulting from the Comprehensive System review aimed at incentivizing clients from all backgrounds and disability types to pursue higher education. USOR also agreed to provide updates on the Supported Employment Service Milestone.

## **New VR Counselor Training Program**

**USOR RESPONSE:** USOR confirmed the updated CSPD incorporates role-based training for new and existing staff through VR University's 18-month blended curriculum. Progress is tracked via YesLMS, covering core topics and providing ongoing professional development. The plan aligns with federal VR requirements and ensures counselors are equipped to deliver high-quality, client-centered services.

## **RSA Monitoring Report Findings**

**USOR RESPONSE:** USOR detailed corrective actions to address findings, including updating regulations and policy review procedures, discontinuing interim vocational goals in IPEs, correcting TWE coding, and enhancing internal fiscal controls. Policy updates and training processes ensure compliance with federal and state regulations, support effective service delivery, and align with agency goals. USOR confirmed all corrective actions will be remediated within 180 days, unallowable funds were not used, and SRC support for implementation is welcome. The SRC approved the corrective action plan and policy updates.

## **CRP Provider Agreement Updates**

**USOR RESPONSE:** USOR agreed with the SRC's requests and confirmed that the updated CRP provider agreements and Performance Dashboards

will be published publicly to enhance transparency and accountability. USOR emphasized that these updates support monitoring, promote provider accountability, and help drive continuous improvement in services and employment outcomes for clients.

## **Review of WIOA State Plan Goal Update**

**USOR RESPONSE:** USOR accepted the SRC's recommendation and proposed adding 2–3 new goals informed by RSA monitoring findings and recent performance data. USOR and the SRC will collaborate to identify these new goals and corresponding strategies.

## **Order of Selection:**

**USOR RESPONSE:** The agency agreed with and accepted the Council's recommendations. It affirmed that information and resources would be made available to clients, applicants, and stakeholders to help them understand the Order of Selection process. The agency also committed to exploring alternative terminology for the waitlist to reduce confusion with another agency's waitlist while maintaining transparency for VR clients.



# VR PROGRAM SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES

## ACHIEVEMENTS

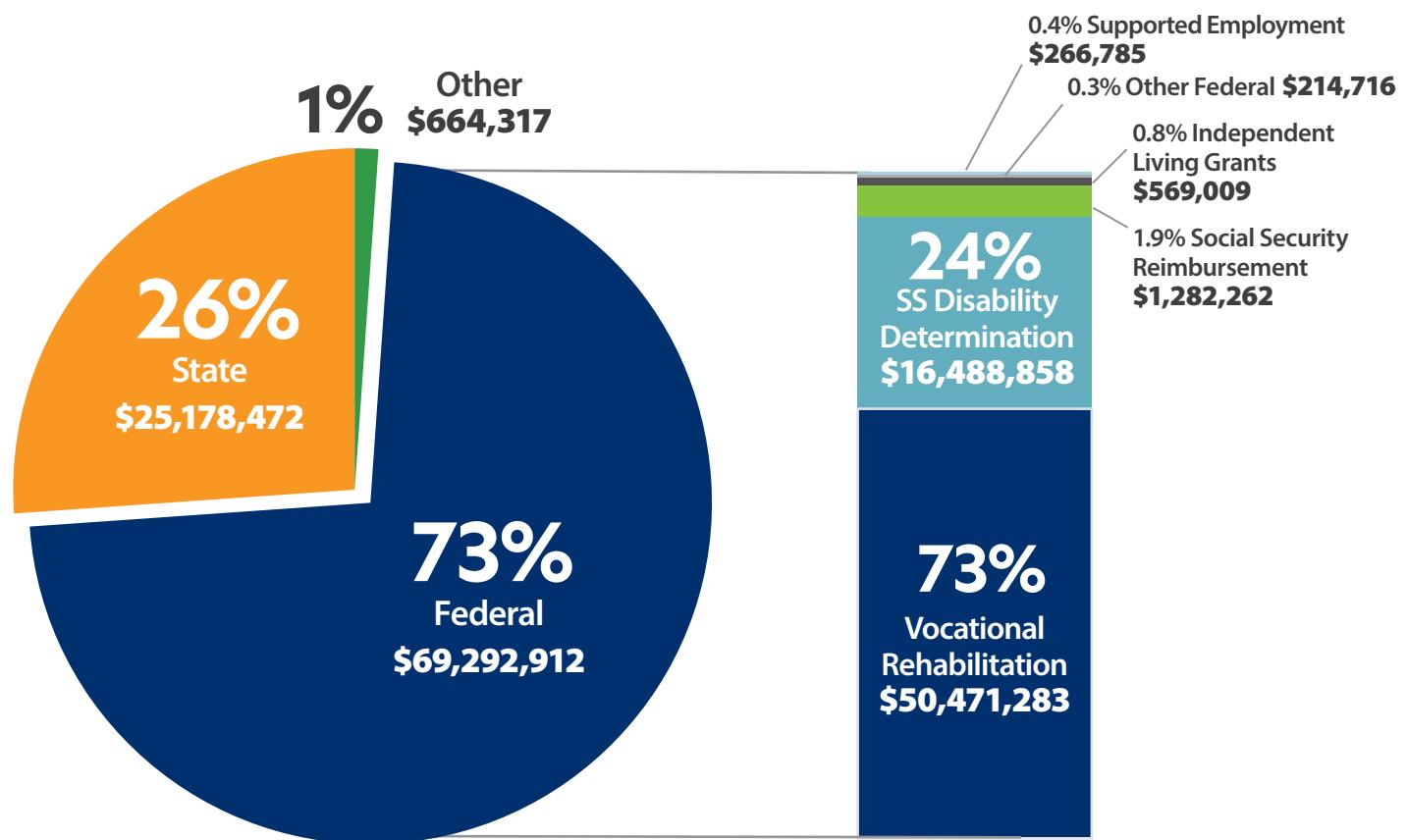
- USOR has made significant progress in expanding pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities. These services assist students in successfully transitioning to adulthood by offering career exploration, life skills training, and hands-on workplace experiences. Through targeted outreach, strategic partnerships with school districts, and the implementation of expanded service pathways, USOR reached more students and equipped them with essential tools for their future, resulting in a 14% increase in the number of students served.
- USOR was highlighted as a top-performing state in the 2025 Transition Impact Awards, receiving national recognition across multiple Pre-ETS service areas for significant student skill development and measurable progress. At the state level, Utah ranked #1 nationally in eight service categories: Job Exploration Counseling, Work-Based Learning Experiences, Postsecondary Counseling, Financial Literacy, Independent Living and Orientation and Mobility, Instruction in Self-Advocacy, Job-Seeking Training, and Workplace Soft Skills. These achievements demonstrate USOR's commitment to high-quality transition programming, strong partnerships with schools and community providers, and consistent investment in evidence-based practices that help students build independence, workplace readiness, and long-term career success.
- USOR has expended significant efforts to provide services and support to employers to hire and retain individuals with disabilities through our Business Relations services. This year saw a 15% increase in the total number of employers served, the addition of two in-person job fairs in rural areas, and the expansion of virtual training opportunities.
- USOR's ongoing efforts to promote the ABLE Utah program, a savings initiative under the Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act, continue to enhance financial stability and independence for individuals with disabilities. ABLE Utah allows participants to save and invest without affecting benefits such as Medicaid or SSI, with funds available for disability-related expenses. Over the past year, the program has experienced a 41% increase in active accounts and reached \$10 million in managed assets.

## CHALLENGES

- USOR continues to balance the needs of clients with the need to maintain high-quality services amid growing demands. The past year has seen an increase in the number of applicants, the total number of clients served, and the overall cost of providing services. These trends place additional pressure on available resources, requiring careful prioritization, strategic planning, and operational efficiency to ensure that individuals with the most significant disabilities receive the support they need to achieve their employment goals.



# USOR SFY 2025 EXPENDITURES



# USOR VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD 2025

State Fiscal Year		New VR Applicants
2024		8,427
2025		9,313
State Fiscal Year		VR Clients Served
2024		18,830
2025		21,432
State Fiscal Year		VR Clients Closed Employed
2024		2,003
2025		2,450
State Fiscal Year		Measurable Skills Gain
2024		56.8%
2025		57.1%
State Fiscal Year		Employers Served by Business Relations
2024		2,116
2025		2,435

State Fiscal Year		Utah Work Incentive Planning Services Benefits Summaries Presented
2024		627
2025		645
State Fiscal Year		New UCAT Clients Served
2024		612
2025		602
State Fiscal Year		Social Security Beneficiaries Closed Employed
2024		494
2025		381

## WORKFORCE INNOVATION & OPPORTUNITY ACT (WIOA) COMMON PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Federally Negotiated Targets and Outcomes for the Utah Vocational Rehabilitation Program

	Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit		Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit		Median Wages		Credential Attainment		Measurable Skills Gain	
	Negotiated Goal	Actual Outcome	Negotiated Goal	Actual Outcome	Negotiated Goal	Actual Outcome	Negotiated Goal	Actual Outcome	Negotiated Goal	Actual Outcome
2024	52.0%	54.1%	50.3%	51.4%	\$4,096	\$5,019	30.9%	38.0%	56.3%	56.7%
2025	54.0%	51.7%	53.0%	50.0%	\$4,805	\$5,474	38.0%	39.2%	55.5%	57.1%



# PY24 CLIENT SATISFACTION SURVEY RESULTS

VR Staff Treated Me with Respect	
Strongly Agree/Agree	79.85%
Neutral	9.20%
Disagree	2.99%
Strong Disagree	7.96%
Total	100.00%
I understood from the start that the goal of VR is to be employed	
Strongly Agree/Agree	86.46%
Neutral	6.63%
Disagree	2.76%
Strong Disagree	4.14%
Total	100.00%
I understood my responsibilities as a client during each stage of working with VR	
Strongly Agree/Agree	78.03%
Neutral	9.58%
Disagree	6.20%
Strong Disagree	6.20%
Total	100.00%
I had the opportunity to work together with my VR counselor to develop my plan	
Strongly Agree/Agree	76.88%
Neutral	9.47%
Disagree	6.41%
Strong Disagree	7.24%
Total	100.00%

My VR counselor listened to my needs and concerns	
Strongly Agree	75.21%
Neutral	7.52%
Disagree	7.24%
Strong Disagree	10.03%
Total	100.00%
I work in a job that I chose	
Strongly Agree/Agree	83.57%
Neutral	7.98%
Disagree	2.35%
Strong Disagree	6.10%
Total	100.00%
Overall, I am satisfied with my experience with USOR	
Strongly Agree/Agree	67.33%
Neutral	7.67%
Disagree	7.95%
Strong Disagree	17.05%
Total	100.00%
I would recommend VR to friends with disabilities who are looking to find work, keep work, or advance their careers	
Strongly Agree/Agree	70.09%
Neutral	9.12%
Disagree	7.69%
Strong Disagree	13.11%
Total	100.00%

# SUCCESS STORIES



## Claudia Ramos



### OCCUPATION: Medical Assistant, Revere Health

COUNSELORS CENTRAL UTAH DIST:

VR Counselor: Cristiane Lundgreen,  
Employment Specialist: Dustin Townsend

#### VR PROVIDED ASSISTANCE:

- Vocational counseling and guidance
- Individualized Plan for Employment
- Tuition assistance
- Clothing for training and employment
- Transportation assistance
- Job development and placement (Choose-to-Work)

**S**eeking a better life in Utah for herself and her unborn child, Claudia was ready for a fresh start. After navigating difficult choices, she embraced change and applied for vocational rehabilitation (VR) services, determined to become a medical assistant but needing support to achieve her goal.

VR counselor Cristiane Lundgreen provided that crucial guidance. With Cristiane's support, Claudia enrolled in the medical assistant program at Mountainland Technical College in Lehi. Funding from a Pell Grant and the Utah State Office of Rehabilitation (USOR) helped launch her healthcare career journey.

USOR assisted with essential costs, including scrubs, supplies, transportation, certification exams, and her Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA) membership. Claudia thrived, excelling in HOSA competitions at both state and national levels.

Following her academic success, she connected with Choose-to-Work specialist Dustin Townsend for resume assistance, job development, and placement. This collaboration led to an internship and subsequent full-time employment with Revere Health. Now a promoted Medical Assistant, Claudia earns \$19.50 an hour.

"I am here today because Cristiane believed in me and gave me this opportunity," Claudia shared. "Thanks to her and Vocational Rehabilitation, I received everything I needed to be successful."

Claudia's journey is a powerful "school to scrubs" story. With her drive and expanding medical knowledge, she's not only building her future but also making healthcare a little brighter.



# Scott Olsen



## OCCUPATION: Team member, C-A-L Ranch Stores

### COUNSELORS:

VR Counselor: Sheree Meyer, Southern Utah District  
Benefits Counselor: DJ Bartschi, UWIPS

### VR PROVIDED ASSISTANCE:

- Vocational counseling and guidance
- Individualized Plan for Employment
- Job development and placement
- On-the-job coaching and training
- Benefits counseling

Scott greeted vocational rehabilitation counselor Sheree Meyer with a big smile and a confident, “I’m Scott. I have autism.” This self-assurance, along with his strong self-advocacy and clear life goals, immediately set him apart and became a cornerstone of his success.

Seeking to manage depression and develop coping strategies, Scott requested help finding a therapist. He was also determined to advance beyond his training at Deseret Industries, with a clear ambition to work at C-A-L Ranch Stores. This goal became the driving force behind his Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) and the services VR provided.

Together, Scott and his counselor chose Allies Supported Employment in St. George as his community rehabilitation program (CRP). Through them, he received a work strategy assessment, job development, placement, and on-site job coaching at C-A-L Ranch.

Scott quickly proved to be a valued C-A-L Ranch employee. He’s known for his focus, customer service, and meticulous organization of merchandise—especially boots, his favorite task. His outstanding service has already earned him three gold boot pins,

and he’s approaching his one-year milestone.

His colleagues speak volumes of his impact. “Scott is always smiling. We can’t do it without him. The boot section would never get done,” shared a coworker. Another coworker noted, “He never has a bad word to say and is always willing to help.”

Scott’s mother lauded the vocational rehabilitation experience, saying, “You listened and didn’t rush us. It was a good fit. Scott had time to process and respond.” The family also appreciated benefits specialist DJ Bartschi for expertly navigating SSI, Medicare, and Medicaid benefits.

Scott reaffirms that his favorite task is “straightening boots.” He enjoys his team and often buys matching outfits from the store, which he proudly wears to his vocational rehabilitation appointments. He’s a punctual employee, riding his E-bike to work daily.

While Scott’s achievements are a testament to a collaborative effort—Involving USOR staff, his therapist, CRP coach, benefits specialist, and family—it’s his unwavering self-determination and positive attitude that truly define him as “A man with a plan.”



# Robbie Simpson



OCCUPATION/JOB TITLE:  
Project Management Specialist,  
Exteriors, Utah, LLC

COUNSELORS: Barbie Cederlof, Valley West District  
Carmen Bento, Workforce Development Division

#### VR PROVIDED ASSISTANCE:

- Vocational counseling and guidance
- Individualized Plan for Employment
- Restoration services (therapy and medications)
- Clothing for employment
- Job referrals and resume development from WDD
- Transportation assistance

When Robbie Simpson first came to vocational rehabilitation (VR), he carried a lot of personal baggage, from past trauma to significant legal issues. Despite these barriers he was determined to rebuild his life and establish a career rooted in hard work, financial and emotional stability, and self-respect. His extensive construction experience fueled his desire in spite of the self-made challenges that had hindered the past several years of his life. His decision to work with VR, changed the trajectory of his future vocational success.

His disabilities required ongoing therapeutic intervention and medication management services. Overcoming these obstacles to employment required the counseling and guidance of his VR counselor. Together they identified a suitable career that met both Robbie's extensive construction, equipment operation, and project management experience, but that would not cause challenges associated with his past legal history. With additional job preparation, resume, and job search services from the Workforce

Development Division (WDD) programs, Robbie was more prepared for the transition to gainful, competitive employment.

His goals were realized when he obtained a full-time position as a project management specialist with Exteriors Utah, LLC. The starting \$36/hour salary provided an extra dose of confidence and put him back on a stable career path. Robbie's journey is one of true resilience, both navigating the long-term emotional impact of childhood trauma and the social stigma associated with a legal background. Robbie took charge of his future with the help of VR and WDD and today he is thriving as a productive member of society.

# FY 2025-2026 MEETING SCHEDULE



January 28, 2026 (9-11 a.m.)

February 2026 (No Meeting)

March 25, 2026 (9 a.m. -12 p.m.) - In-Person

April 2026 (No Meeting)

May 27, 2026 (9-11 a.m.)

June 24, 2026 (9-11 a.m.)

July 2026 (No Meeting)

August 2026 (No Meeting)

September 30, 2026 (9 a.m. -12 p.m.) - In-Person

Note: All times subject to change due to meeting in-person or on ZOOM

Meeting location:  
Judy Ann Buffmire Rehabilitation Service Center Conference Room  
1595 West 500 South, Salt Lake City, UT 84104

**For more information:**  
**801-887-9505 or 866-435-7414 (toll-free)**  
**<https://jobs.utah.gov/usor/vr/partners/src.html>**

***Equal Opportunity Employer/Program***

Auxiliary aids (accommodations) and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities by calling 801-526-9240. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have speech impairments may call Relay Utah by dialing 711. Spanish Relay Utah: 1-888-346-3162.



**WORKFORCE  
SERVICES  
REHABILITATION**



State  
**Rehabilitation**  
Council

**usor.utah.gov**

Utah State Office of Rehabilitation  
A Division of the Department of Workforce Services

1595 West 500 South  
Salt Lake City, UT 84104